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ABSTRACT

One of 52 theoretical papers on school crime and its relation to poverty, this chapter is an attempt to bridge theory, research, experience, and practical responses in schools encountering crime. Based on extensive work in schools experiencing high rates of violence and vandalism, the authors present a brief review of existing theoretical perspectives and develop a new framework for examining both individual and institutional interchanges and how these interchanges affect delinquency behavior over time. The article presents a methodological approach to research in school settings and discusses access, entry, data collection techniques, and realistic avenues for long-range responses to school crime. (Author/MLF)

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"PLUS ÇA CHANGE...":
SCHOOL CRIME IN AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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A paper from
"Theoretical Perspectives on School Crime"

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to bridge theory, research, experience, and practical responses in schools encountering crime. Based on extensive work in schools experiencing high rates of violence and vandalism, the authors present a brief review of existing theoretical perspectives and develop a new framework for examining both individual and institutional interchanges and how these interchanges affect delinquency behavior over time. The article presents a methodological approach to research in school settings and discusses access, entry, data collection techniques, and realistic avenues for long-range responses to school crime.

The Background

Within the last 10 years, we have witnessed an entirely new and largely unexpected phenomenon: serious crime in the schools. Once considered neutral (sometimes sacred) turf, schools are now experiencing a rash of murders, rapes, robberies, and acts of wanton destruction, directed at everyone and everything within and around the school setting. And the increased incidence has been sufficiently sudden and steep to catch both practitioners and researchers almost totally off guard.

Lacking solid data on causes and effective programs, school administrators have nonetheless been required by circumstance and public tumult to develop responses, however hastily conceived, to the new realities which confront them. Researchers and theoreticians, on the other hand, have the luxury of distance and assumed impartiality while weighing the alternative explanations and solutions. Despite the novelty of the situation, the temptation to utilize traditional explanations of behavior is great. Unfortunately, however, the facts of life in schools today argue against interpretations based solely on experience in other settings. The complexity of the problem requires new, testable, programmatically sound conceptual frameworks. This paper attempts to make an initial contribution to that need.

School Crime: A New Perspective

Researchers already know much about the phenomena we seek to describe and understand. We know a good deal about the extent of ar' kinds of serious crimes now being committed in schools ~ now something about the kinds of people who commit the crimes; and we can identify some of the characteristics of schools which experience high crime rates. More information is needed, surely; but so are new ways to see, and use, the data.

The early epidemiologic studies of youth and crime centered on the attributes of offenders, influenced, perhaps, by the individualism which is so large a part of the American intellectual tradition. This approach, often referred to as the medical model, called for a thorough investigation into the person-centered maladies which, it was believed, had to underlie deviant behavior. Studies of the somatotype of the offender were the first in a long series of investigations. These have included Beccavia's work on pleasure and pain in criminals; Lombroso's examinations of criminals' physiological characteristics; and Kertschmer's, Glueck's and Sheldon's studies of body structure. More recent researchers have focused on chromosomal abnormalities and unusual brain waves in the search for an explanation of why deviants are "different."

As psychology became more sophisticated, researchers turned to the personality and attitudes of youth to "explain" delinquency. Over the past 50 years, work has been done on the variables of hostility, anxiety, guilt, sexual maladjustment, deprivation, intelligence (or lack thereof), ego development, achievement, learning disabilities, and many others.

In attempting to explain crime in schools, contemporary researchers continue to draw upon the classic, individual-focused explanation of delinquency. The work of Martin (1961), of Clinard and Wade (1958), and of Ducey (1976) on the personality types of vandals epitomizes the medical model. Their core question is "What is it about these kids that makes them violent or destructive?" Unfortunately, this work has generated as much heat as light: popularized, it has led too often to simplistic explanations of the way "they" are. Since the "they," in school crime, are often poor and Black, the response of minority communities has been powerful and predictable.

But there are other major weaknesses which arise from attempting to explain school crime in terms of the characteristics of its perpetrators. First, the explanations are too often ahistorical: by ignoring the interactions between the individual and the institutions which surround him or her, we tend to forget the specific historical process

which led this individual through a thicket of people and institutions to the criminal acts he has committed. Secondly, person-centered research leads to fundamental epistemological difficulties. The search for one or a few explanatory characteristics in individuals too easily ends in contradictory explanations which ignore the complexity of real behavior in the real world. Finally, from the point of view of school practitioners, who must, with or without research, create programs to combat school crime, the results of person-centered research are too often useless. Whether the explanation is genetic or psychological, the chain of causation leads back to the individual or family--which the school cannot significantly affect. And meanwhile the building is burning down.

On the other side of the fence stand (undaunted by the wind) the determinists. The main theme of this approach, which is diametrically opposed to the person-centered explanations described above, is that the behavior of humans is governed by external stimuli, stimuli which can be known. Here, we are passive beings in an active world, and can be described entirely in terms of our outward behavior.

Out of the deterministic analysis have risen the psychological behaviorists, including Watson, Hull, Pavlov, and Skinner, and their social determinist analogs. The central goal of research, from this perspective, is to

examine the contingencies in the environment which influence behavior; completely described, it is presumed that these contingencies will completely explain the behavior they cause.

The environmental theories have enjoyed a good deal of popularity in juvenile delinquency research. A number of variables, including peer groups, family relations, role identification, educational experience, and housing and economic conditions have all been examined. Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) theories of delinquency, Thrasher's work on gangs, Burgess and Parks' ecological studies of Chicago, and Short's research on urban environments are examples of environmental-approach studies.

The two major schools of thought--the person-centered and the environmental--have provided us with a great deal of data on the antecendents of delinquency and school crime. They may, however, have reached the point of bankruptcy: they may be able to yield little more knowledge about why our schools have experienced so much violence and destruction or what can be done about it. The explanations of school crime based on the medical model have led us to a theoretical blind alley. The questions asked, and the research conducted, all stem from the paradigms of normal science, which confine the range of evidence to a few readily quantifiable individual characteristics.

Similarly, the explanation of school crime based on the environmental approach are often inappropriately narrow. There is much evidence, for instance, to support the notion that crime rates fluctuate with the economy, housing, family conditions, and employment. But few, if any, of those factors can be significantly influenced--much less controlled--by individual school districts seeking to combat school crime. Furthermore, predicating so much individual behavior on largely amorphous social characteristics can lead, all too readily, to familiar generalizations about how "they" are.

The central difficulty with either approach in isolation arises from the unidimensionality of the respective arguments. The person-centered approach diverts attention from the role that groups and society at large play in defining choice of behavior; and the societal/environmental perspective denies the individual the capacity to shape destiny. On the one hand, the individual is held accountable; on the other, society. Neither explanation recognizes the dynamics of the interaction between the individual and the institution; neither describes the changes in both individual offenders and the institutions they confront over time; neither provides the practitioner with a clear link between research and response, information and solution.

A few attempts at merging the two approaches have been made. These include Sherif's (1936) work on social norms and perceptual processes, Zimbardo's (1975) research on student needs and the educational social structure, Sarason's (1971) writings on the ecology of schools and individual psychology, Szasz's (1969) theories of culture and mental illness, and Piaget's (1952) investigations into the interaction of organisms and their physical and social environments. Applied to delinquency, merged perspectives can be seen in the works of Lemert (1972), McPartland and McDill (1976), Polk and Schafer (1972), Schur (1973), and Cardarelli (1975).

But we have yet to see much recognition of the interaction between student and school in the research on school crime. There is research on the student criminal and research on the victimized school, but there are few detailed, small-scale studies which reflect the daily interchange between student and school over time and how that interchange influences crime. More important, there are few, if any, conceptual tools that schools can use to translate findings into intelligent programs, which will generate further findings to inform further programs. In the remainder of this paper, these are the issues we will seek to address.

The perspectives described above have provided two alternative theoretical frameworks for the development of

approaches to understanding delinquency and school crime. Several limitations of the person-centered and determinist explanations for delinquent behavior have been discussed in detail. One shared weakness of both perspectives bears mentioning.

The data they have generated, and the explanations they have provided, appear to us to furnish an insufficient foundation for generalization and theory development. They furnish, in our view, a still less adequate basis for the creation of social or educational policies to reduce delinquency and school crime, whether at the school, community, state, or national level.

There are a number of unmet needs. First, we need clearer, more comprehensive agreement on what does, and does not, constitute school crime, how to quantify it, and how to report it. Our current research on school vandalism,[1] for example, indicates that there are almost as many definitions as there are school districts, with completely incompatible cost and incidence estimates resulting from the divergent criteria.

And the differences are fundamental. Some systems include some categories of apparently accidental damage; others do not. Some include all destruction, while others

[1]The authors are currently directing a national review of promising programs to reduce school vandalism for the Council of the Great City Schools. The final product, an LEAA Prescriptive Package, is to be published sometime next Fall.

include only acts for which a perpetrator is identified. Some systems exclude damage covered by insurance, while others do not. The statistical impact of these differences is staggering. And similar confusions exist in other categories of school crime reporting. Clearly, common agreement on criteria is needed if we are to begin to build reliable, testable theories that transcend individual schools and systems.

The remainder of this paper seeks to address another, equally fundamental need. In addition to building a common data base on school crime, we need also to begin constructing a framework of small-scale studies of individual school settings which will permit us to test, measure, and evaluate a range of approaches to reducing criminal and delinquenct behavior in our schools.

In another field of social research, confronting similar discrepancies between available data and need, St. John (1975) had this to say about directions for future research:

> The most needed type of research at this juncture is probably not a mammoth longitudinal testing program with measurements of dozens of background variables to allow exquisite statistical manipulation. ...But, far more illuminating would be small-scale studies involving anthropological observations of the process of ...schooling. (pp. 122-123)

We will attempt, in the ensuing pages, to develop a theoretical and methodological framework for the small-scale studies which, we believe, are required. In addition, we will present relevant results of our own research as it informs the concepts we propose, and describe some of the lines of investigation and intervention which might be fruitfully pursued by researchers and practitioners in the future.

The Framework

When we began working in troubled schools some years ago, we were overwhelmed by the richness of information and experience which flowed continuously among all parties in the setting. Some of it was direct, observable, recordable (such as teacher reinforcements, or the racist language on bathroom walls we transcribed so diligently). Other, equally powerful elements were much less readily identified and analyzed.

These included variables of "tone" and "climate," instantly perceived by anyone entering a school building but obdurately difficult to separate into their constituent factors; an incredible range of positive and negative symbolic transactions involving all parties in the system; individual issues of pride and self-concept; the interwoven complexity of individual and collective history within and

outside of the institution being studied; the impact of events in the larger community; rumor; weather; and many others. Regardless of the explanatory system brought to it, the sheer richness and intricacy of behavior and information around any phenomenon (from crime to pre- or post-mating behavior) appeared inexhaustible, and exhausting.

One example will suffice. A particular high school seemed largely peaceful, on the surface, but the behavior of a few "tough" kids was seen by the administration as extremely dangerous. The "tough" kids, we were told, badmouthed teachers, cut classes, didn't care, isolated themselves, lacked school spirit. Symbolizing their isolation was their "seizure" (according to one administrator) of a girls' bathroom.

For the first few weeks, the bathroom was used by the "toughs' of both sexes to smoke without getting caught; bitch about school; hide out while cutting classes; seal themselves off from the rest of the students; and, occasionally, use the toilets.

Slowly, however, it became more than a hangout; slogans and the names of the kids went up on the wall; a radio was installed; and the hallway near the bathroom was occasionally sealed from passersby by "tough" students. Anxious to avoid violence, the administration put up with everything except the writing on the walls. One Saturday the principal had the bathroom painted over.

On Monday, the worst riot the district had yet experienced occurred. The building, particularly in and around the famous bathroom, was severely damaged; students and teachers were beaten; and several "tough" students were arrested and ultimately expelled.

Later that week, the principal--who had always argued that he could handle anything--asked us what to do. The violence had continued; several more students had been beaten; lockers were being torn from the walls. We began talking to everyone who would talk to us, and an apparently simple problem of vandalism grew more and more complex, involving charges by students of prior abuse and maltreatment, lack of family and community support, poor communications within the building, and a raft of other problems. Eventually, we began to focus our attention on the perceived quality and observed reality of the interactions among individuals (students), others who represent the institution (teachers and administrators), and the physical setting itself.

On its own accord, over the next few weeks, the school violence temporarily subsided, leaving the same deeper festering problems but removing the immediate crisis. We continued our investigative work, but we found our administrative support gradually dwindling as superficial relations improved. We lacked the appropriate level of

commitment on the part of the school principal and had not negotiated and cultivated the relationship prior to our "crisis" efforts. The result was that we finished out the school year at the site and arrived at a mutual agreement not to return the following fall.

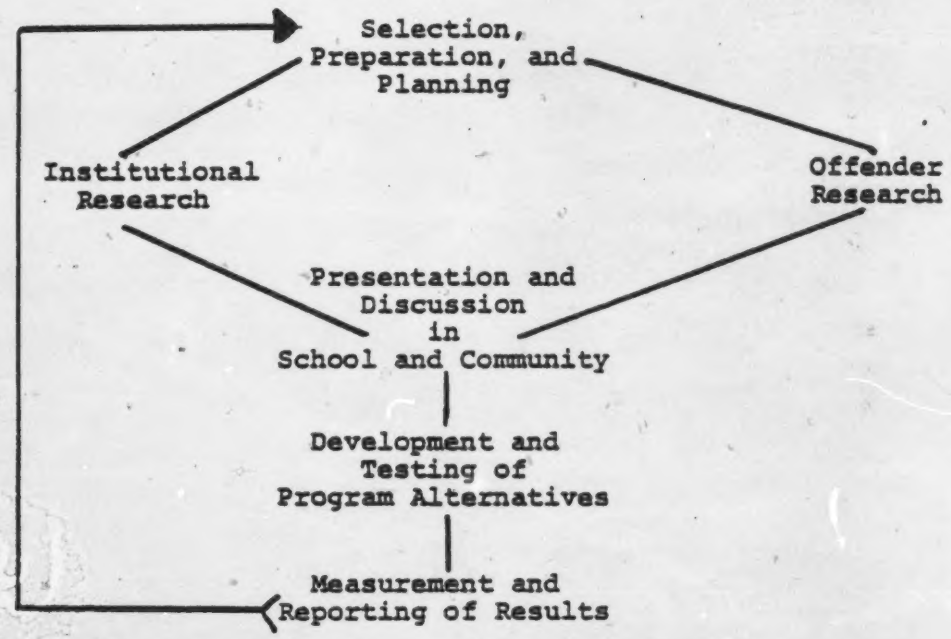
Clearly, there was no simple solution to the problem of violence in that school, or indeed in any school. But, as we listened, we began to understand that simply describing the current interchanges, as perceived by all parties, was insufficient. In order to help administrators, teachers, and students in that setting--and in the other settings that have followed--we needed also to look at the historical interactions which had led all parties to the abyss of crime and violence. Without a historical perspective, the abyss would be unbridgeable; in our subsequent work in the Boston schools, for instance, we needed not only the epithets, but a profile of the prior interactions between Black and white kids which, filtered through their separate assumptions, had helped create their current conflicts.

Over the last several years, we have begun to build this kaleidoscope of insights and impressions into an operational framework for carrying out small-scale research and intervention projects involving school crime and delinquency in individual school settings. As the approach makes clear, the primary objective of our work is to build an accurate descriptive profile of how and why crime and

delinquency function in the setting, and how to guide all members of the school community in creating effective programs to combat it.

Some aspects of this framework have been fully tested in several of our projects in schools; others are in process. As we continue to develop it in our own work, it is our hope that other researchers and school practitioners will begin to report parallel findings in other schools and systems, thus constructing an empirical base for future theory.

In outline, the process proceeds as follows:


Selection, Preparation, and Planning
Institutional Research
Offender Research
Presentation and Discussion in School and Community
Development and Testing of Program Alternatives
Measurement and Reporting of Results

Selection, Preparation, and Planning

Small-scale longitudinal studies leading to program development require much more careful site selection and preparation than do much larger studies. The relationships which develop between researchers and the multiple actors in the school are, necessarily, complex and intense. Furthermore, the unfolding process of the study itself places significant, growing pressures on all parties, and particularly on the administrator in charge. These pressures are most dramatic--and dramatically resisted--when research begins to lead to programs to combat delinquency which require alterations in other aspects of school organization.

For example, in one middle school which was confronting serious problems of random vandalism and student-to-student extortion, an analysis of school records and interviews with students indicated that inequitable treatment of minority students (especially boys) was at the heart of the issue. Discipline was differentially applied; nearly 75 percent of minority males had been arbitrarily assigned to classes for the "retarded"; teachers using racial epithets were not reprimanded; and the like. Yet, when faced with a choice between small-scale experiments aimed directly at altering these factors and pressures from teachers and the majority community to "vandalproof" the school, the administrator

chose the latter because it represented a less complicated, more concrete alternative. Needless to say, this approach eventually resulted in increased school crime.

These cautions aside, what should researchers look for in selecting a site to study and support? First, in our experience, it is vital that the key actors in the setting--top administrators, a few key teachers, influential parents--perceive the problem as serious. Without serious, generalized concern, the pressures generated by the study itself may become too much for the administrative structure to bear, especially when change is required.

Secondly, the personal relationships between key researchers and key administrators, in particular, represent a central variable in small-scale longitudinal studies. Questions of access, influence, openness to change, and feelings of interpersonal support need to be appraised before the study is initiated. And, beyond the school, some information is needed on the relationships between the school and the surrounding community, between key administrators in the school and their supervisors in the system, between teachers and administrators, and among the administrators themselves. Longitudinal programs are easily destroyed by changes in school leadership, changes which frequently could have been predicted.

Once the setting has been selected, the preparation and planning phases follow. Because of the profound

differences among settings, generalizations are likely to be of little use. A few, however, may apply. First, all parties in the setting--including delinquent and nondelinquent youth, staff, administrators, parents, and members of the larger community--need to understand what is going to happen, when it will happen, what will be expected of them, how they can contribute to the results of the study, and how and when they will receive information on results. They need, as well, the clearest possible expressions of support for the project from responsible administrators, in person and in writing. In one school, we learned all too late that the "support" we were receiving in our presence from the principal was translated during our absence into attacks.

Finally, in the preparation and planning phase, all parties in the school need to be encouraged to participate concretely and directly in the process, providing ideas, reviewing suggestions, generating alternatives, and the like. Because of the length and complexity of the study itself, early "ownership" by the participants in the setting can be vital to success.

Research

Both the offender-centered and the institutional phases of the research seek to delineate the interchanges

which occur within the setting. One describes the perspective and understanding of the delinquent youth; the other portrays the point of view of others with formal roles in the institution. Conceptually, the focus on interchanges from both individual and institutional perspectives seeks to break down the barriers between the person-centered and environmentalist approaches, and to resolve some of their theoretical and methodological weaknesses.

Offender Research

This phase of our research is not primarily intended to identify which delinquent youth are committing what offenses. It is, instead, aimed at understanding and profiling the interchanges between youth and the institution of the school which lead, and have led, to destructive and criminal behavior. The goals are epidemiologic, rather than clinical.

To accomplish them, a two-pronged investigation is utilized: exploring existing school records and interviewing identified delinquent and predelinquent youth and significant others in their lives. From these data, detailed case histories are prepared describing the individuals' "life paths" of interchanges within and outside of the school setting, focusing on those events

which appear to lead toward criminal behavior. Throughout the data collected on individuals are not used for identification of perpetrators, but to develop a clearer perspective of patterns of behavior in the school.

For purposes of investigation, four populations are identified as likely to be involved, or to have been involved, in criminal or destructive behavior: (1) dropouts, (2) chronic truants, (3) chronic disciplinary cases, and (4) individuals apprehended in cases of school-related crime.

Through a systematic analysis of school, court, police, and other available records, supplemented by interviews with representatives of the appropriate institutions, basic information on identified youth in each category is collected and summarized. Principal questions for each category include:

<u>Who are they?</u>

Age

Original residence

Sex

Time in city or town

Ethnic group

Family status

AFDC or other welfare

Physical disabilities

What has happened to them?

School history: performance

School history: discipline

School history: counseling

Dropout, truancy

Previous police/court contact

Previous convictions/sentences

Diversion, probation, other alternatives

Where are they now?

Current residence

Employment

Current educational/training programs

Current counseling

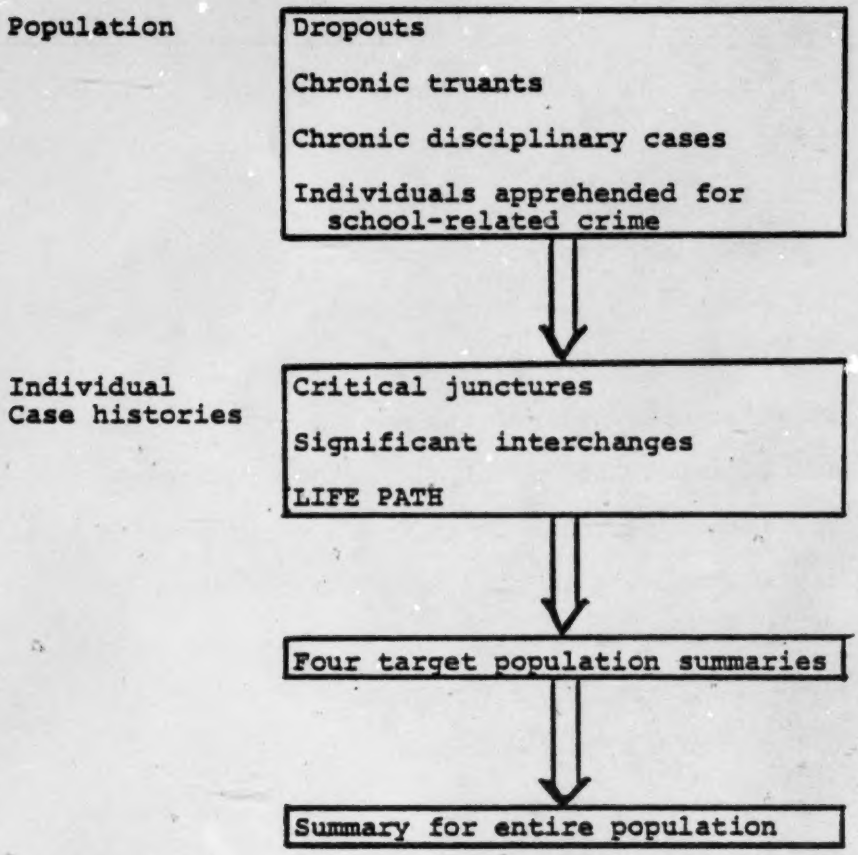
Current police/court contact

Current convictions/sentences

From these data, we can begin to construct a profile of the history of a representative sample of juveniles for each of the target populations, which will help us to understand these youth. All records are numbered and confidentially maintained.

Equally essential are the individual case histories, which describe in greater detail, from the point of view of the juvenile tempered by information from other actors in the setting, the life paths followed. A random sample from each of the target population categories is selected

for in-depth interviewing; all participation is voluntary. The framework for this phase of the study is presented in schematic form below:



Individuals selected from the four target populations are interviewed exhaustively about their past experiences. The interviewer uses a modified version of the critical incident technique originally developed by Dr. John Flanagan (1954). Through this method, specific events

which the juvenile believes led to the present situation are identified in multiple social contexts in and out of school. These events, termed critical junctures, are elaborated to include significant actors, the setting, feelings and responses, what was said, and when and how it was said. The social contexts may include home, school, community, police station, peer groups, courts, and many others.

An interviewer might ask, for example, when and how the youth first got into trouble in school. Why? With whom? Who was there? What happened as a result? How did it affect his/her parents and family? Peers? The teacher and administrator involved? Other teachers? The purpose of these interviews is to develop as detailed a description as is available to the individual of the events surrounding the critical juncture he or she has identified.

For example, a confrontation in school might have led to the youth throwing a rock through the classroom window--and getting caught. A critical juncture. The event would then be detailed, to show how, why, when, and where the youth threw the rock, who else was there, and what happened as a result.

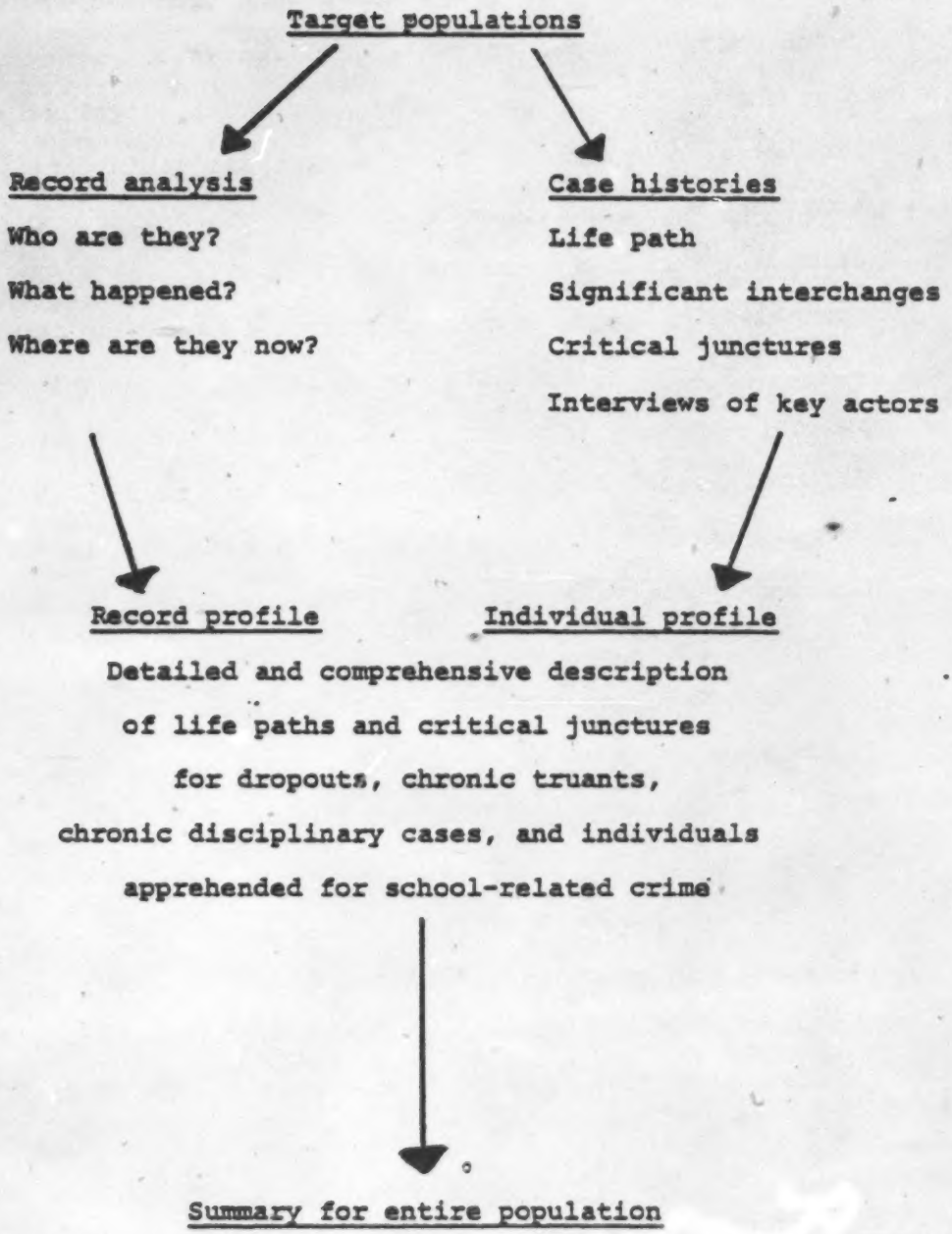
Through the critical incident technique, events are collected and coded showing the types, characteristics, and attributions of responses. At the same time, the

base data retain the completeness and richness of descriptive personal accounts. We recognize, however, that the events as reported by individual juveniles are likely to be colored by their desire to justify their actions and thus may bear little resemblance to reality. Once the critical junctures have been identified by the students themselves as major points of movement toward delinquency, other key actors (teachers, peers, parents, administrators, police) who were involved are sought out and interviewed for their versions of the event. In this manner, a more accurate set of case histories is assembled to complement the record analysis. This procedure is shown in the following page.

The data for each of the target populations, and for the group as a whole, are collected and summarized. At this point, commonalities among the critical junctures for individuals in the study are identified, to determine the similarity within and among the target populations. These summary profiles, collected from the life path data and focused on the common critical junctures, become the foundation for the institutional research, which is described below.

Institutional Research

The institutional research phase of the study parallels, and builds upon, the methodologies utilized and the results


Target populations
Record analysis
Who are they?
What happened?
Where are they now?
Case histories
Life path
Significant interchanges
Critical junctures
Interviews of key actors
Record profile
Individual profile
Detailed and comprehensive description
of life paths and critical junctures
for dropouts, chronic truants,
chronic disciplinary cases, and individuals
apprehended for school-related crime
Summary for entire population

generated in developing the case histories and life paths of delinquent youth. The goal, in summary, is to identify and understand the key school processes (termed binding) which, from the institutional perspective, correlate positively with the critical junctures identified in the offender-centered research. A detailed description of the binding processes is developed, documenting policies, procedure, activities, and interactions between institutional representatives and students. This description is termed the school profile.

The same disclaimer is needed for this phase of the study as was presented previously for the delinquent youth. The goal of the institutional assessment is not to identify "bad" staff or administrators, or "bad" processes. It is, rather, to add substance to our understanding of the crucial aspects of the constant and intimate interactions which take place in school, or in any other social setting.

Presume, for a moment, that the counseling and placement process had been frequently identified as a critical juncture leading to delinquency for a significant number of youth in a given school. A careful look at how the guidance and counseling process actually worked would follow, including a second survey, observations of counseling sessions, interviews with students and counselors concerning the sessions which were observed, and general interviews

on the counseling process with others in the school. Similar studies would be conducted for other binding processes[2] in the school which were identified in prior phases of the research.

A set of basic information about the school (analogous to the profile of the individual) is collected. The record survey would elicit basic background data about the school setting and the binding processes identified. Major questions include:

Who?

Number of students

Primary language

Ethnicity/sex of students

Ethnicity/sex of staff

Training of staff

Special class assignment (disturbed, retarded)

Socioeconomic status

What resources are available?

Curriculum and books

Special programs

Extracurricular programs

External support

[2]The binding processes would vary dramatically from setting to setting. Examples, drawn from our previous work, have included classroom placement, special placement, classroom discipline, central office discipline, lunchroom control, hallway control, physical education activities, peer-peer interactions, out of building conflicts, home and neighborhood, and many more.

Available staff

Available volunteers

Community programs

Transportation

Support from other systems

What are the constraints?

Location

Physical structure and facilities

Vandalism

Community attitudes

Staff attitudes

Student attitudes

Mandated programs

Relation to supervision/School Committee

Dropout, retention, and attendance rates

Per pupil expenditure

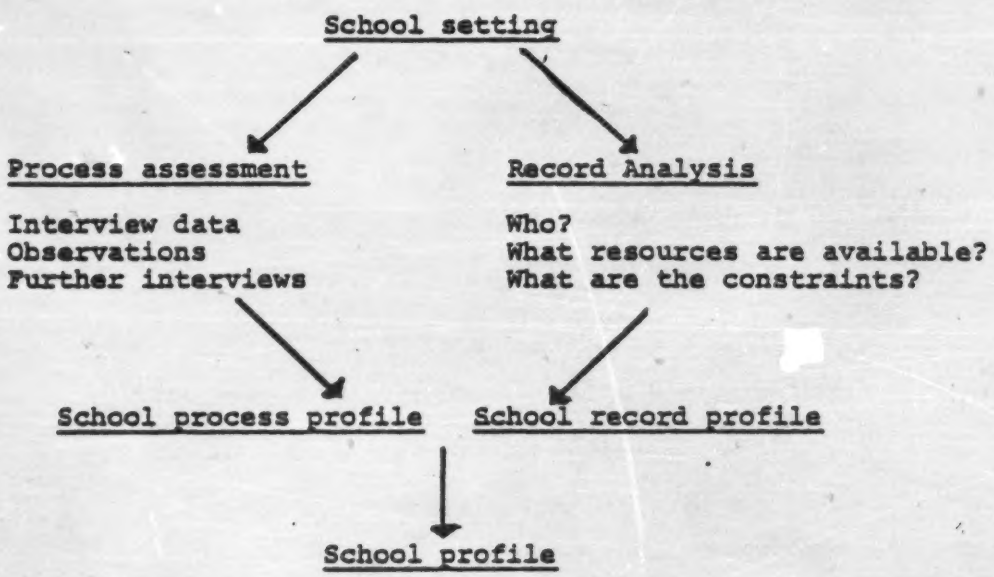
Problems unique to school/community

These data provide the basic input and outcome information on the particular school setting.

The second major component in building the school profile is the process assessment. The process assessment examines in detail the interchanges which actually take place around a binding process on a day-to-day basis. It becomes, therefore, an in-depth version, from another vantage point, of institutional data to parallel the

individual data gathered previously in the offender-centered phase of the research.

Major school actors are interviewed in depth to determine how they perceive the built-in conflicts, strengths, and limitations of the process. We explore perceived support from administrators and other professionals, use of resources, frustrations, work load, use of time, volume of paperwork, etc. And we observe the process in action to see how it actually works for the different populations in the school, focusing on the interchanges between other parties and students in the high-risk target populations. The development of the school profile is summarized below:



Presentation and Discussion in School and Community

The summarized results of the offender-centered and institutional phases of the research--focused on the critical junctures and the binding processes which have been identified and validated for the individual school--are presented to separate groups of youth in the target populations, other students, teachers, administrators, and parents and community representatives.

Each group is asked to think about the research results which have been provided and decide whether the data accurately represent their own experience. Further discussions ensue. For each of the critical junctures and binding processes, the groups separately attempt to develop sets of procedures, alternative arrangements, or new programs to improve the student-institutional interchanges which have been revealed in the report.

As options are separately developed, the groups begin to merge to develop and elucidate joint plans in the problem areas which have been identified. Because of the direct involvement of the school administration, it is anticipated that support among decision makers for the programs which are developed is likely to be more readily available. The same is true of other key community agencies and decision makers who are directly involved in the program. It is essential to note, however, that this phase of the process

has not yet been tested in the field, although a test is anticipated in the near future.

Development and Testing of Program Alternatives

At this point in the process, the program alternatives aimed at altering critical junctures and binding processes in the school are implemented, and a new round of program development, evaluation, and alteration begins. It is important to note that the program alternatives, however admirable, are not "solutions." As Seymour Sarason (1971) has noted in another context, there are no solutions in social affairs: because of the vitality and movement of institutional life, all "solutions" necessarily lead to new sets of problems--binding processes--which will require new alternatives, which will generate new problems.

These generalizations apply equally to programs aimed at delinquency and ones aimed at crime. The process of assessment, program development, evaluation, and reassessment needs to be permanent and ongoing if concrete results in the reduction of criminal and delinquent behavior are to be sustained.

Measurement and Reporting of Results

Near the beginning of this paper, we discussed the need for comparable, cross-system data on school crime. In measuring the quantifiable impact of the alternative programs which are designed to reduce school crime, researchers need to keep in mind both comparability within the system over time and cross-system relevance. When selecting measures of incidence of vandalism, for example, we need to note the statistical foundation which already exists in the system, and its methodological rationale (if any) and national trends in data collection in areas such as vandalism. Without comparable data, research can become either historical or isolated from larger realities--all-too-common fates for educational evaluation.

In addition to looking at the quantifiable indicators of crime and delinquency, researchers need to continue, in our view, to collect the descriptive interactional information discussed above. This is important for two reasons. First, the real impact of a program aimed at reducing school crime is qualitative as well as quantifiable, and will be revealed in the altered and improved interactions among all parties in the school. And, secondly, as the process continues, ongoing research will reveal new initial junctures and new binding processes, which will lead to new programs aimed at changing individual and institutional arrangements. In school settings, at least, our experience

persuades us that while change is constant and improvement possible, permanent programs leading to permanent solutions are not. And, in our view, that is just as well for all parties living and working in that complex, exciting, and frustrating web of relationships which we call school.

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